

## **In Round 1, Tories bash Liberals on carbon tax, western issues; Minority Parliament begins and NDP offers lukewarm support**

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### **Body**

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Just two days into a new minority Parliament, the fight against climate change emerged as an early flash point as the Conservatives accused the Liberal government of dividing the country in its determination to keep a price on carbon and "punish" energy workers and ordinary Canadians, while other parties pushed the Liberals to advance climate action further.

Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer delivered a lengthy criticism of the government's throne speech Friday that replayed many of his party's election themes, and aggressively attacked Trudeau.

He claimed the country is now threatened by a "national unity crisis" and riven with divisions - east vs. west, English and French, urban and rural.

Scheer warned that the throne speech, presented by the governor-general on behalf of the government a day earlier, failed to address the economic worries of Western Canadians hit by depressed commodity markets.

He proposed a so-called amendment that would essentially gut the Liberals' governing plan and adopt Conservative platform planks.

Scheer's suggestions included a repeal of both new environmental legislation and an oil tanker ban in the Pacific Northwest.

And he vowed to use all tools at his disposal to oppose the government's agenda.

The Saskatchewan MP, who faces growing doubts about his own leadership and calls within his party to step aside, cautioned the Commons to not underestimate the "deep alienation and anger" that residents of his province and Alberta feel about "their deal in Confederation."

Scheer said Trudeau made a "grand show" of meeting with opposition leaders, premiers and mayors in the weeks after the election that saw the Liberals lose seats.

Yet the throne speech - which set out climate change, Indigenous reconciliation, tax breaks for the middle class and health care as top priorities as Parliament resumed this week - showed that the prime minister "didn't learn a thing."

"That is what I was waiting to hear. Some humility. I'm still waiting," Scheer said.

But Trudeau fired back that it is Scheer is out of step with voters. He was backed up by New Democrat Charlie Angus who accused Scheer of denying the science on climate change and pushing a ridiculous "conspiracy theory."

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Canadians, Trudeau said, want the government to be more ambitious in fighting climate change, citing the more than 60 per cent of voters who cast ballots for the Liberals, Bloc Québécois, NDP and Greens.

Scheer dug in on his opposition to the Liberals' carbon pricing program, branding it a costly hit on "struggling families."

And he declared that as long as he is leader, the Conservative party "will always oppose a carbon tax" and his amendment to the throne speech called on the Liberals to abandon the carbon pricing.

"It's time to stop targeting Canadian commuters and seniors - and instead focus on innovative, market-based policies that prepare Canada for the future and can ensure we make a real impact on global emissions," the Conservative leader said.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh faulted the government for not using the throne speech to detail even more aggressive targets in the climate change fight "to boldly tackle the crisis that we are in."

However, Singh offered lukewarm praise for several elements of the government's agenda but faulted the Liberals for not offering more details on issues like the environment or housing.

He said the NDP was encouraged by promised measures to cut cellphone costs but said the government's proposed action - talking to telecom companies - was unlikely to achieve results.

Singh also cheered the government's apparent willingness to consider national dental care, which the NDP have championed. "

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